

RECOGNITION OF NEW EXERCISES AND PROGRAMS

AVP-World discussion stream 4/8/08

DYNAMIC MANUAL WRITING

The AVP group in Sydney, Australia, has used the AVP-USA manuals in running AVP workshops for the last 17 years. Like many AVP groups around the world we have developed our own local versions of learning activities/exercises based on local culture and local AVP facilitators experience and insights. We have documented these local versions into local AVP manuals and our facilitators use both the USA and local manuals.

We have also developed a wiki to enable us to distribute the latest versions of local learning activities/exercises and to enable all interested local facilitators to participate in the collaborate process of contributing their own learning activities and/or commenting on the current versions. The current versions of manuals are updated and printed for each new current print run and new versions distributed to AVP facilitators regularly.

After my recent visit to the AVP-USA National Gathering and conversations with Grace McGrath, AVP-USA Education Committee Chair, we are currently upgrading the avpmanuals wiki and now invite facilitators around the world to access or join our wiki.

We have started the process of loading in the AVP-USA manual learning activities, though this process will not really happen until late September after we have returned from Nepal. We plan that hopefully by the end of October we will have loaded in all the content of the AVP-USA manuals and any other local manual or new learning activities that anyone would like to share.

WIKIS

We are using Wikispaces as it was the easiest and most versatile platform using open source software for wiki-style collaborative collection and development of AVP material and experience. Currently we use Wikispaces in a view-only mode using pdf files to collect and disseminate completed updates of learning activities and topics for viewers to use and comment. Our current editorial process occurs off-line.

Wikispaces also has an inbuilt collaborative editing mode using a word-like editor. It has the advantage of not requiring any special set up, software or server apart from any internet browser. As wikispaces uses an open source of wikis (similar to Wikipedia) the design and content will be able to be migrated to any future platform that becomes available in the future.

The avpmanuals wiki is private for use of AVP facilitators only. To use the <http://avpmanuals.wikispaces.com> site you can either join yourself by contacting avpsydney@avp.org.au or using the generic AVP facilitators access – username – 'member' and password – 'texashug'.

AVP IN NEPAL

Right now we are currently revising the AVP Sydney manuals in preparation to taking them, with the AVP-USA manuals to Nepal in 10 days.

Four AVP facilitators Aletia, John, Katherine and Malcolm will join Ken another AVP Sydney facilitator who has moved to Kathmandu to run a series of AVP workshops to set up an AVP program in Nepal. John and Ken have run two basic workshops, in three weeks we are planning to run a series of 8 AVP workshops – an Advanced, a T4F, then two concurrent Basics, two concurrent Advanced and then two concurrent T4F workshops.

These workshops will be held in English and we hope to leave more than 30 trained facilitators, a number with experience as apprentice facilitators in the second series of workshops. We will also look at the documentation of local variations of AVP learning activities to suit the local culture and experience. It is planned to include these local variations on the wiki when we return.

Katherine & Malcolm Smith
AVP(NSW) Sydney

Date: Mon, 4 Aug 2008 14:30:29 -0400

Subject: [avp-world] Re: Recognition of new exercises and programs

Dear Val et al:

You have asked some interesting and important questions as AVP truly becomes an international organization, ones that I hope will get discussed at AVP International.

You are asking what needs to happen for new exercises in a local region to get "recognized". This question was discussed at length in the early days of AVP, and in fact, there were some exercises rejected from the manuals as inappropriate for AVP, with some hard feelings. There was a concern that as local organizations developed, some did not maintain their ties to regional or national groups, sometimes resulting in program drift and workshops that were not recognizable as AVP workshops. Finding the balance between encouraging creativity and innovation and maintaining a standard has always been a tension. I am not sure that we have ever completely defined and agreed upon exactly what constitutes an AVP workshop and what elements are essential, and how much of what is essential is process, and how much is content. This might be a very useful question to be discussed with an international group, as different cultures might answer this differently.

We discussed these questions at AVP-USA in Bellingham this May, and had a wonderful dialogue with Katherine Smith of Australia who has put all the AVP manuals into a Wiki, with access for viewing for everyone, and a more limited access for adaptation of material than a typical Wiki. Included are many variations on exercises from the USA manuals, as well as additional exercises.

Katherine has an interesting take on your question. She sees the AVP- USA manuals as the "basic" manuals, from which adaptations are made. (She used another word than "basic" which I do not remember). She sees this as a way to maintain quality control. So, for example, she and some other Australian facilitators were planning some workshops in Nepal, but will leave the Nepalese with USA manuals to adapt to their culture, despite having developed innovative Australian manuals. The concern was that if the Nepalese adapted the Australian manuals to their own culture, and then brought their program to Thailand, where the Thai facilitators adapted the Nepalese manuals, who then brought their program to Vietnam where..... etc. etc. It is like making a copy of a copy of a copy and ending up with something that might not resemble the original. This is not to say that the USA manuals are the "best", but they are the standard from which all else developed.

As AVP continues to develop internationally, it certainly seems essential that regional groups develop materials that are culturally sensitive, while at the same time find a way to maintain their ties with AVP International, and perhaps AVP-USA in order to maintain an integrity with the program that we can still call it AVP. We have never copywrote our materials so that people are free to use them in developing conflict resolution programs, but they must maintain ties to AVP in order to call their program AVP.

I have chaired the development of the youth manual and the revision of the Basic and the Advanced manual, and am on the committee for the revision of the Training manual. I will say it is difficult to get people to work on these projects as they are extremely intensive and time consuming. We have always asked for input from people outside the US, and Elaine Dyer is the only one who has really stepped up to be fully involved. So, these revisions continue to be AVP-USA projects, by default. It is also USA that has the financial resources to print manuals. Fortunately, Katherine Smith has volunteered to be on the Training revision committee, along with Elaine. This revision is taking a while for a variety of reasons, including that this is a more difficult manual to develop. International input is welcome. I hope this helps,
Amazing Grace McGrath

On Aug 2, 2008, at 12:42 AM, valliveoak@juno.com wrote:

Friends,

As coordinator of Friends Peace Teams initiative, Peacebuilding en las Américas, I am aware for a number of new exercises developed by AVP groups in Latin America. Also our group is working with PAV- Colombia (PAV is AVP in Spanish) to develop an Advanced/2nd level workshop on community-based trauma healing.

Our question is, how do new exercises or programs get recognized? My last knowledge of the process involved the Education Committee of AVP-USA. Is it time for there to be an international group that approves and distributes information about new work? Or should country groups develop their own procedures?

AVP has become a worldwide movement, and has shown remarkable capacity to adapt to needs in countries and cultures far different from the US, but to my knowledge, the manual development process and ownership still resides in AVP-USA. How does AVP grow beyond the organization and "ownership" of AVP-USA, or should it? How can quality control be maintained?

Thanks to Doug Couch for his efforts to improve communication and access internationally to AVP groups around the world.
Paz--Val Liveoak